

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

In the specification, paragraphs have been amended on pages 8-9.

Claims 1, and 3-9 are currently being amended.

This amendment changes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After amending the claims as set forth above, claims 1-9 are now pending in this application.

Drawings

Figure 2 has been amended to include the legend "PRIOR ART" thus overcoming objections to Figure 2.

Applicants have amended Figure 1 to label the load port door with reference numeral 12, thus overcoming the rejection of the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a). Support for the amendment to Figure 1 can be found in the specification at least on page 8, first paragraph, and page 9, second full paragraph. The specification on pages 8 and 9 has been amended to include the reference numeral 12 to be consistent with the amendment to the drawings.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. Applicants have amended the claims to address the concerns raised in the Office Action, and submit that the claims as amended are definite under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 2000-053238 A (hereafter “JP ‘238”) in view of Japan 62-290696 A (hereafter “JP ‘696”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a substrate processing apparatus. The apparatus includes a load port table, a shield plate provided so as to surround the load port table, and a shield door that can be opened or closed provided on the shield plate. Applicants submit that JP ‘238 and JP ‘696 fail to suggest both a shield plate surrounding a load port table, and a shield door provided on the shield plate.

JP ‘238 discloses manufacturing equipment means 13 and an interception portion 17 that intercepts the transfer of a substrate 9 between the equipment and a floor carrier means 7 (abstract, Figure 2). From Figure 1 of JP ‘238 it appears that the interception portion is some type of barrier that moves into or out of element 15 upon which the substrate 9 may rest.

In contrast to claim 1, however, JP ‘238 fails to disclose either the shield plate as recited, or a shield door provided on the shield plate. In fact the Office Action concedes that JP ‘238 does not disclose a shield plate surrounding a load table. Moreover, JP ‘238 does not disclose a shield door. The interception portion 17 is not a door, but is merely a barrier that appears to be able to be moved into and out of element 15 of the JP ‘238 apparatus.

JP ‘696 fails to cure the deficiencies of JP ‘238. The Office Action equates the box like station 200 of JP ‘696 with the shield of the claims. ~~Even if there were proper motivation~~ to combine JP ‘696 with JP ‘238 (which there is not), however, the combined structure would not include a shield door provided on the shield. As discussed above, the interception portion 17 is not a door. Moreover, the interception portion 17 of JP ‘238 is designed to move into and out of element 15, not to be provided on any shield. Thus, even if JP ‘696 were combined with JP ‘238, the combination would lack a shield door provided on the shield. For at least the above reasons claim 1 is patentable over JP ‘696 and JP ‘238.

Independent claims 5 and 6 are directed to substrate processing systems and recite a shield door that can be opened or closed provided on a shield plate. Thus, claims 5 and 6 are patentable over JP '696 and JP '238 for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Independent claim 7 is directed to a method for conveying substrates and recites that the shield door is maintained in a closed state under certain circumstances. JP '696 and JP '238 fail to disclose a shield door, and thus claim 7 is likewise patentable over JP '696 and JP '238.

For at least the reasons given above, applicants submit that claims 1 and 5-7 are patentable over JP '696 and JP '238, and requests that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103 be withdrawn. Dependent claims 2-4, 8 and 9 depend from one of claims 1 and 7 and are patentable for at least the same reasons, as well as for further patentable features recited therein.

For example, dependent claim 3 recites a lock mechanism for holding the shield door in a closed state, wherein the shield door is maintained in the closed state thereof by making the lock mechanism function when the wafer carrier is brought in and out of the load port table by said conveyer means. JP '696 and JP '238 fail to disclose a lock mechanism as recited in claim 3.

Dependent claim 4 recites that the shield door is maintained in the closed state thereof when the wafer carrier brought from another processing apparatus arrives above the load port table. JP '696 and JP '238 fail to disclose this feature of claim 4. JP '696 has no door on its box like station 200 which the Office Action equates with the shield plate as claimed. The interception portion 17 of JP '238 appears to be designed to be lowered when a floor carrier means 7 is near element 15. There is no suggestion in JP '238 of locking interception portion 17 when a wafer carrier arrives above element 15, which the Office Action equates with the load port table as claimed.

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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